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ABSTRACT

A National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant funded a study to establish an International Humanities Curriculum that would serve as a model of curricular internationalization upon which interested observers might draw for revision of their own curricula. This curriculum revision project introduced the study of texts, ideas, themes, and issues from China and Japan into the literature curriculum of Robert Morris College. China and Japan seemed obvious choices for enhancing the international dimension of the humanities curriculum at that college. China, which is both the oldest and the largest country in the world promises to exert a major economic and cultural influence upon global affairs in the future, and since rebounding from World War II Japan has become a model of industrial efficiency and success. Goals for this business-focused curriculum included (1) enabling students to gain a deeper understanding of the human experience as it has been lived in two major world cultures; and (2) building a valuable foundation of contextual knowledge for making sense of professional practices, strategies, issues, and obstacles that students will face on an international scale as workers and leaders in business and industry. The study and the interdisciplinary collaboration which was essential to its implementation led to the conclusion that curricular internationalization provides valuable common ground between disciplines traditionally indifferent or hostile towards each other. Participants further concluded that forging meaningful interdisciplinary partnerships not only requires rethinking traditional notions of disciplinary borders, but also requires learning to cross those borders. (Four tables are included.) (SAM)

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INTERNATIONALIZING THE BUSINESS SCHOOL:
Constructing Partnerships Between the Humanities and the Professions During an NEH Grant Project

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Acknowledgement

Special acknowledgement is given to the National Endowment for the Humanities for generous funding of the 1992-93 Faculty Study Project in Chinese and Japanese Literatures at Robert Morris College, which provided the context and the source of ideas for writing this paper. The Faculty Study Project was the first major step in a larger effort to internationalize the undergraduate curriculum at Robert Morris College. During the project, faculty members from across the disciplines collaborated in a successful effort to incorporate texts, ideas, themes, and issues from China and Japan into the humanities curriculum. The main goal of establishing an International Humanities Curriculum was to establish a model of curricular internationalization that faculty in other disciplines at our College and interested observers at other post-secondary institutions might draw upon in the future.

INTERNATIONALIZING THE BUSINESS SCHOOL:

Constructing Partnerships Between the Humanities and the Professions During an NEH Grant Project

I. Introduction

It is rare that a business-focused institution receives major grant funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. And yet Robert Morris College, with 95% of its degrees awarded last year in the business and professional disciplines, recently received a $118,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to introduce the study of texts, ideas, themes and issues from China and Japan into our literature curriculum. Three inter-related goals guided the development of this project:

- To introduce an international dimension into the RMC humanities curriculum
- To encourage faculty in the professional disciplines to make substantive links to this internationalized humanities curriculum
- To construct a model of the process of curricular internationalization that other departments and other institutions might benefit from in the future

China and Japan seemed obvious choices for enhancing the international dimension of our humanities curriculum. With nearly 4000 years of continuous history behind it and 1.2 billion citizens at the last recent census, China ranks as both the oldest and the largest country in the world. Furthermore, with a Gross National Product of $350 billion per year and growing, China promises to continue to exert major economic and cultural influences upon global affairs in the foreseeable future (Collinwood 1991). The same, of course, is true of Japan, which has rebounded from the devastation of World War II not only to become a model of industrial efficiency and success, but also to become the largest creditor nation on the planet and the largest single source of capital for U. S. investment (Cohen 1991).

Equally important to such "businesslike" reasons for studying China and Japan is the fact that both have wonderfully rich and complex literary and cultural traditions. In and of themselves,

these traditions demand the study of educated and informed persons in modern times. Thus, as a business-focused institution, we see potential for a double benefit from a study of Chinese and Japanese literatures. First, our students will gain deeper understanding of the human experience as it has been lived in two major world cultures, providing an added dimension to their understanding of the world and of their own place in it. Second, they will build a valuable foundation of contextual knowledge for making sense of professional practices, strategies, issues, and obstacles on an international scale that they will face in other courses and as workers and leaders in business and industry after leaving our institution.

To foster a coherent link between the humanistic and the professional objectives of the project, we invited a number of non-humanities faculty members to take part. They included representatives from Management, Marketing, Computer and Information Systems, Accounting, and Social Science. Multidisciplinary participation has given rise to one of the most intriguing aspects of the undertaking: the establishment of cross-disciplinary partnerships uniting the richness of humanistic study with the contextual relevance of the professions. Participation in the Faculty Study Project has provided a context in which to struggle with major issues and obstacles that face any interdisciplinary undertaking, and particularly one that seeks to foster such broad and multi-faceted learning as is represented by international and cross-cultural awareness. Two major findings that have evolved out of our attempts to conduct significant cross-disciplinary collaboration include the following.

1. Curricular internationalization provides valuable common ground between disciplines traditionally indifferent or hostile towards each other.
2. Forging meaningful interdisciplinary partnerships not only requires rethinking traditional notions of disciplinary borders, but it requires that we learn to cross those borders.

Finding #1:
Curricular Internationalization Provides Common Ground Between Disciplines.

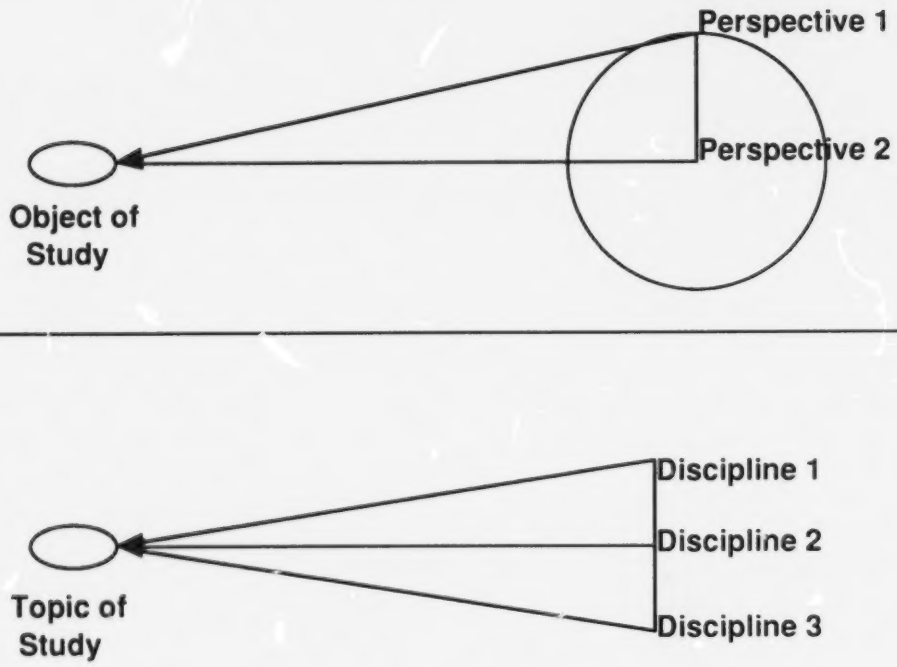
One of the first things that becomes obvious when faculty members decide to encourage international awareness is that no one discipline has a monopoly upon doing so. In areas we find more familiar, such as American management practices, marketing in the U. S., U. S. corporate

decision-making, or contemporary argumentation and rhetoric, practitioners in the various disciplines have carved out their turf and often feel little need to collaborate with colleagues in other disciplines. It is an interesting, and troubling, feature of academic life that once we have organized and codified knowledge into a set of disciplinary constraints, it is easy for us to feel we no longer need to look at that knowledge from more than one perspective. In the international realm, this is one of the first things that gets challenged.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the "common ground" effect internationalization has upon disciplines is through reference to the concept of parallax from astronomy. This principle states that in order to determine the distance between our planet and any other object in the universe, as well as to find out such things as the speed and direction of movement of the object, astronomers need to look at it from two or more different positions in the manner indicated in the first part of Table 1.

Table 1

The Parallax Principle and Multi-Disciplinary Study



The parallax concept provides a useful metaphor for studying international topics when it is applied as shown in the second part of Table 1. It is very difficult to make sense of an international topic when observing it through the perspective of a single discipline. Unlike treating domestic concerns, where scholars and students alike have some familiarity with the cultural, historical, social, and psychological backgrounds, if only by virtue of having lived in the same culture, such essential contextual information is missing when we look at more distant topics. Thus to understand the movement and direction of, for example, modern Japanese marketing strategies, we need insight from the social sciences into the nature of Japanese values that have created and sustain these strategies, from Japanese history, which shows us how major events of this century have shaped Japanese values, and even from the humanities, which can illuminate the Japanese

character, the nature of the social contract, and attitudes towards foreigners and competition (see Cohen's *Cowboys and Samurai* for an example of this kind of study).

The encouragement to find common ground among disciplines that internationalization fosters leads directly into our second major finding in the NEH Faculty Study Project in Chinese and Japanese Literatures. In order to take advantage of common ground, we had first to take down traditional disciplinary borders that limited our collaboration.

Finding #2:
Forging meaningful interdisciplinary partnerships not only requires rethinking traditional notions of disciplinary borders, but it also requires that we learn to cross those borders.

The noted anthropologist Edward Hall has argued that Westerners tend to live "fragmented, compartmentalized lives" that encourage us to think "linearly rather than comprehensively" (1976: 11-12). This fragmentation takes one of its most troublesome forms in the way we have parceled out ways of thinking and knowing among disciplines in American academics. What this meant at the outset of the Faculty Study Project was that many of us knew little about the basic approaches to learning and about the kinds of knowledge that counted most for our colleagues in other disciplines.

To this point in our study of reading materials and viewing of films, in meetings with visiting scholars, and during discussion sessions, I have observed the kind of constant tension between the humanists and the professional faculty that is common in higher education in the U. S. Faculty in the professions have often been frustrated by the willingness of the humanities people to drone on and on in abstractions about complex themes, symbols, and interpretations. Humanities faculty, on the other hand, have tended to shake their heads in dismay at the willingness of the professionals to overlook the complexities of themes and symbols in their eagerness to get to relevant applications.

Both sides in this issue have valid positions, of course. It is important to understand the complexities and the variety of interpretations that underlie important issues. It is also important to to be relevant and to find concrete applications for knowledge . What often keeps this from happening is that our disciplines colonize our brains. Disciplines teach us to organize, to present,

and to value knowledge in a certain way and obscure our ability and/or our willingness to think in other ways. What this has meant for our project is that, while all participants exhibit sincere willingness to learn from speakers and visiting scholars from other disciplines, actually doing so often proves to be very challenging. Breaking out of the confining disciplinary model illustrated in Table 2 is much more easy in theory than in actual, hands-on practice.

Table 2

INTERNATIONALIZING THE BUSINESS SCHOOL:

A Traditional Disciplinary Model

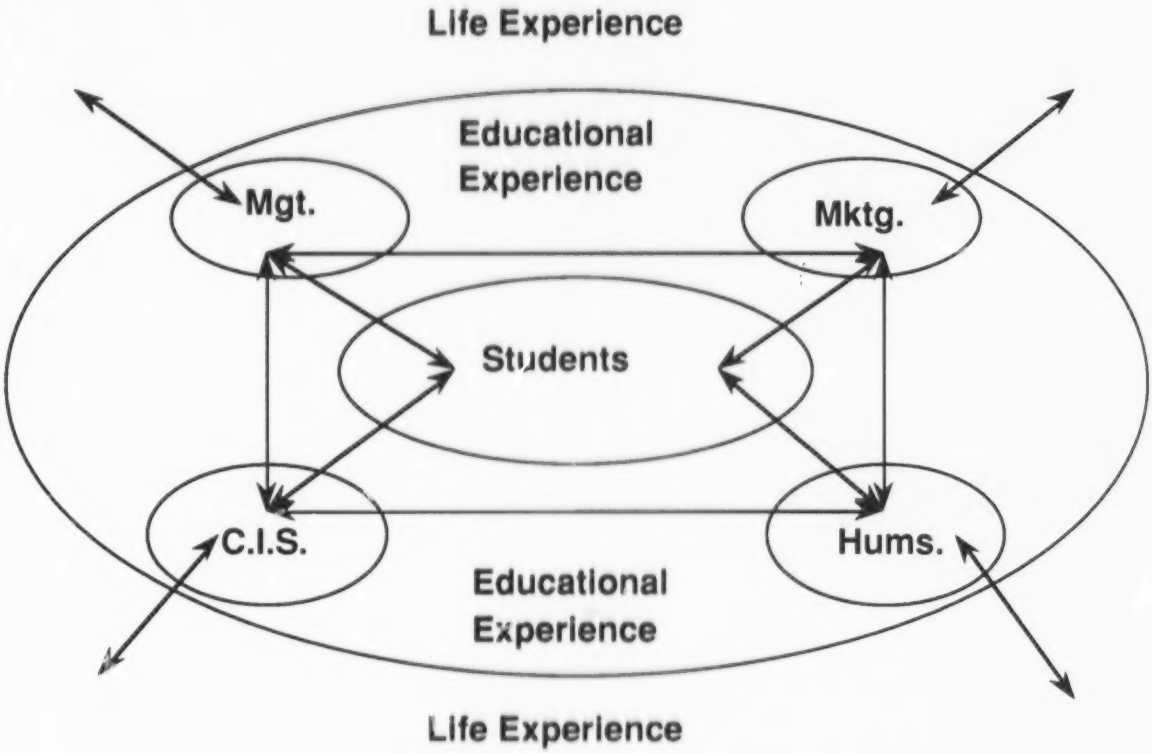
Marketing	Management	Computer Information Systems	Humanities
Creating, distributing, promoting, and pricing goods, services, and ideas	Planning Organizing Leading Controlling	Data Processing Information Systems Applications	Learning or literature concerned with human culture

Table 3 reflects what we found to be a more promising conceptual model of how disciplines can work together to enhance international awareness. This model captures the kinds of interactional links between students and faculty, and across disciplinary borders between faculty that we are working hard to establish in the course of this project.

Table 3

INTERNATIONALIZING THE BUSINESS SCHOOL:

A Disciplinary Partnership Model

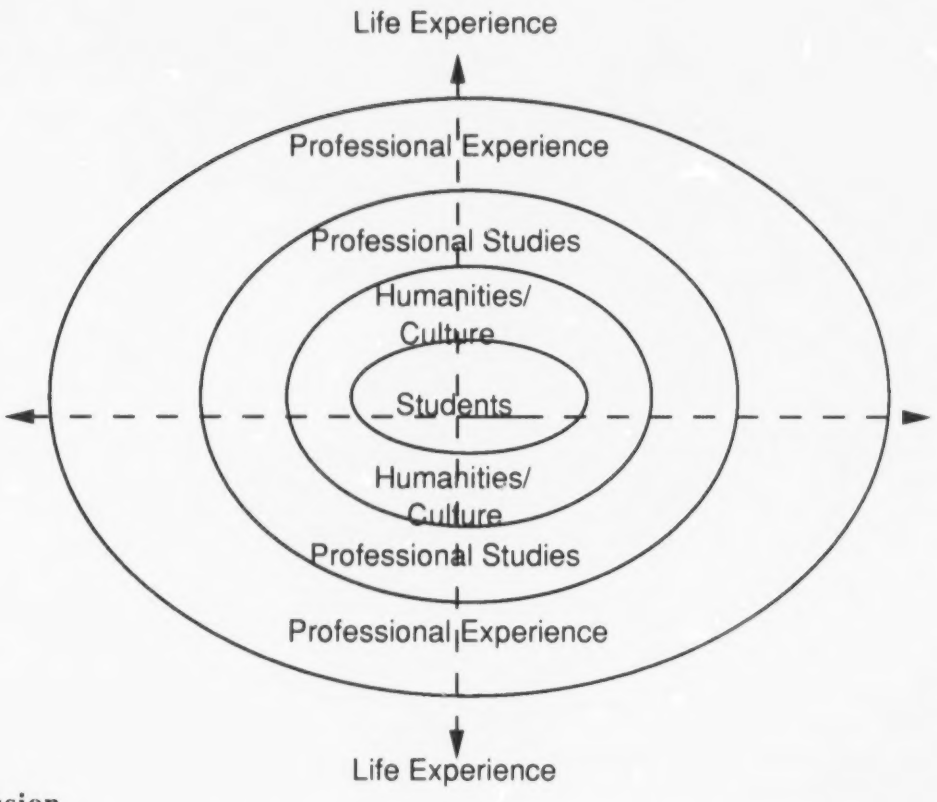


Although the disciplinary partnership model in Table 3 shows a much richer flow of idea exchange and cooperation between disciplines, our faculty felt it still was not the ideal model of how we would like to see our institution function. Table 4 represents our attempt to conceptualize an institution unencumbered with disciplinary politics and struggles over intellectual turf. Here we allow ourselves a holistic approach to learning, with students moving in ever widening circles from awareness of their own world and culture towards learning in the disciplines, in the work place, and in life itself.

Table 4

INTERNATIONALIZING THE BUSINESS SCHOOL:

An Ideal Model



Conclusion

In the long term, efforts to internationalize college curricula may do more for higher education in the U. S. than simply bring increased awareness of other peoples and cultures into our nation. By providing common ground for interdisciplinary collaboration, internationalization may provide one of the strongest incentives for taking down the artificial barriers we have erected between disciplines and allow us to undo some of the fragmentation of knowledge that continues to characterize much of American education.

It is clear that much of the rest of the world continues to take more holistic and comprehensive approaches to learning. One of the lasting legacies that Confucius left China and Asia was what we would call a multidisciplinary approach to knowledge today. *The Analects* inform us that Confucius taught under at least four headings: "culture, moral conduct, doing one's best, and being trustworthy in what one says" (Book VII: 25). A recent summary by a leading expert on global management skills suggests that multidisciplinary skills are as much in demand today as they were in Confucius' time some 2,400 years ago. Referring to qualities essential to effective international management, Robert Moran (1993) writes: "Global managers have high technical expertise, adapt skillfully to different business environments, negotiate effectively, motivate, solve problems quickly, and communicate well with people from different cultures" (17). Higher education must respond to this need for a range of skills and knowledge that no single discipline can effectively offer alone. The partnerships we have formed between the humanities and the professions in the Faculty Study Project in Chinese and Japanese Literatures represents one approach to doing so.

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